

Grade 11 Scoring Guide for Reading and Written Composition

Spring 2003

Copyright © 2003, Texas Education Agency. All rights reserved. Reproduction of all or portions of this work is prohibited without express written permission from Texas Education Agency.

INTRODUCTION

The reading and written composition sections of the TAKS English language arts test are based on three thematically linked reading pieces, called a “triplet”—a literary selection, an expository selection, and a visual representation. The test includes two performance tasks: three short answer reading items and a written composition. The literary and expository selections are published pieces, and the visual representation is a created piece, although it may include some published elements, such as photographs. Using published selections on TAKS makes the assessment more authentic and, therefore, a more valid and reliable measure of student learning in reading at the high school level.

Short Answer Items

The three short answer items on each test assess two skills. First, students must be able to generate clear, reasonable, thoughtful ideas or analyses about some aspect of the published literary and expository selections. Second, students must be able to support these ideas or analyses with relevant, strongly connected textual evidence.

On each test one short answer item is based on the literary selection only (Objective 2), one is based on the expository selection only (Objective 3), and one is based on students’ ability to connect the literary and expository selections (also Objective 3). Short answer items are not used to measure Objective 1, since this objective focuses on basic understanding.

Objective 2

The student will demonstrate an understanding of the effects of literary elements and techniques in culturally diverse written texts.

To appreciate the literature they read in high school, students must develop an understanding of the literary elements that are at the heart of all stories. This understanding must go beyond mere identification to encompass the ways in which the parts of a story, singly and in combination, contribute to its overall meaning. Students must also understand the ways in which an author uses literary techniques and language to craft a story. In short answer items assessing Objective 2, students must write a short response analyzing how literary elements, literary techniques, or figurative language function in a story.

Objective 3

The student will demonstrate the ability to analyze and critically evaluate culturally diverse written texts and visual representations.

To read well at the high school level, students must go beyond their initial understanding or impressions of a selection. Students must be able to develop their own interpretations, make thoughtful judgments about what they read, examine how a selection relates to their own lives, and find meaningful connections across parts of a single selection or between two selections. Students must also be aware of the way an author crafts a selection. An author’s purpose for writing, organizational decisions, point of view or attitude toward the subject, and unique use of language all affect the way a reader reads and understands a selection. In short answer items assessing Objective 3, students must write a short response analyzing or evaluating some aspect of the expository selection or some aspect of text common to or based upon both selections.

TAKS short answer items are holistically scored on a scale of 0 (insufficient) to 3 (exemplary). For each score point, this scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student responses with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand not only your students’ reading development but also the strengths and weaknesses of your school’s reading program.

Written Composition

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas.

The writing prompt is thematically linked to the three reading selections. In this way, students have a built-in context that they may draw from as they plan their compositions. Note, however, that while students may include an analysis or reference to one or more reading selections, this is not a requirement. Students may respond to the prompt in any way they choose.

The composition section of the TAKS English language arts test assesses the knowledge and skills grouped under Objectives 4 and 5. Objective 4 focuses on the quality of the composition's content, while Objective 5 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.

Objective 4

The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 4 tests each student's ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece, a response to reading—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

Objective 5

The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. First, when students write a composition, they are able to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they are able to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader's understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce absolutely error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

TAKS compositions are holistically scored on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). For each score point, this scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student compositions with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand your students' writing development and the strengths and weaknesses of your school's writing program.

The Miraculous Phonograph Record

by William Saroyan

My notes about what I am
reading

1 Sometime soon after I was 13 years old in 1921 I rode home from the heart of Fresno with a wind-up Victor phonograph under my arm, hitched above my hipbone, and one Victor record. On a bicycle, that is.

2 The bicycle went to pieces from the use I gave it as a Postal Telegraph messenger.

3 The phonograph developed motor trouble soon after my first book was published; and while I was traveling in Europe for the first time, in 1935, it was given to the Salvation Army.

4 But I still have the record, and I have a special fondness for it.

5 The reason I have a special fondness for it is that whenever I listen to it, I remember what happened when I reached home with the phonograph and the record.

6 The phonograph had cost ten dollars and the record 75 cents, both brand-new. I had earned the money as a messenger in my first week of work, plus four dollars and twenty-five cents not spent.

7 My mother had just got home from Guggenheim's, where, judging from the expression on her face, she had been packing figs in eight-ounce packs, which I knew was the weight and size that was least desired by the packers, because a full day of hard work doing eight-ounce packs, at so much per pack, meant only about a dollar and a half, or at the most two dollars, whereas, if they were packing four-ounce packs, they could earn three and sometimes even four dollars which in those days was good money, and welcome, especially as the work at Guggenheim's, or at any of the other dried-fruit packinghouses such as Rosenberg's or Inderrieden's, was seasonal, and the season was never long.

8 When I walked into the house, all excited, with the phonograph hitched to my hip, my mother gave me a look that suggested an eight-ounce day. She said nothing, however, and I said nothing, as I placed the phonograph on the round table in the parlor, checked it for any accidents to exposed parts that might have happened in transit, found none, lifted the record from the turntable where the girl in the store had fixed it with two big rubber bands, examined both sides of it, and noticed that my mother was watching. While I was still cranking the machine, she spoke at last,

softly and politely, which I knew meant she didn't like the looks of what was going on. She spoke in Armenian.

My notes about what I am
reading

9 "Willie, what is that you have there?"

10 "This is called a phonograph."

11 "Where did you get this phonograph?"

12 "I got it from Sherman, Clay, on Broadway."

13 "The people at Sherman, Clay—did they give you this phonograph?"

14 "No, I paid for it."

15 "How much did you pay, Willie?"

16 "Ten dollars."

17 "Ten dollars is a lot of money in this family. Did you find the ten dollars in the street perhaps?"

18 "No, I got the ten dollars from my first week's pay as a Postal Telegraph messenger. And 75 cents for the record."

19 "And how much money have you brought home for the whole family—for rent and food and clothing—out of your first week's pay?"

20 "Four dollars and twenty-five cents. My pay is fifteen dollars a week."

21 Now, the record is on the machine, and I am about to put the needle to the revolving disc when I suddenly notice that I had better forget it and get out of there, which I do, and just in time too. The screen door of the back porch slams once for me, and then once for my mother.

22 As I race around the house, I become aware of two things: (1) that it's a beautiful evening, and (2) that Levon Kemalyan's father, who is a very dignified man, is standing in front of his house across the street with his mouth a little open, watching. Well, he's an elder at the First Armenian Presbyterian Church; he isn't from Bitlis, as we are; he's not a Saroyan, and this sort of thing comes as a surprise to him. Surely Takoochi Saroyan and her son are not racing around their house for exercise, or in an athletic contest of some kind, so why are they running?

23 In a spirit of neighborliness I salute Mr. Kemalyan as I race to the front porch and back into the parlor, where I quickly put needle to disc, and hurry to the dining room, from whence I can both witness the effect of the music on my mother, and, if necessary, escape to the back porch, and out into the yard again.

24 The music of the record begins to come from the machine just as my mother gets back into the parlor.

- 25 For a moment it looks as if she is going to ignore the music and continue the chase, and then suddenly it happens—the thing that makes the record something to cherish forever.
- 26 My mother comes to a halt, perhaps only to catch her breath, perhaps to listen to the music—there's still no way of telling for sure.
- 27 As the music moves along, I can't help noticing that my mother either is too tired to run anymore or is actually listening. And then I notice that she is very definitely listening. I watch her turn from the chase to the machine. I watch her take one of the six cane chairs that have remained in the family from the time of my father, from 1911, and move it to the round table. I watch her sit down. I notice now that her expression no longer suggests that she is tired and angry. I remember the man in the Bible who was mad and was comforted by somebody playing a harp. I stand in the doorway to the parlor, and when the record ends I go to the machine, lift the needle from the disc and stop the motor.
- 28 Without looking at me, my mother says, this time in English, "All right, we keep this." And then in softly spoken Armenian, "Play it again, I beg of you."
- 29 I quickly give the crank a few spins and put needle to disc again.
- 30 This time when the needle comes to the end of the record my mother says, "Show me how it's done." I show her, and she starts the record a third time for herself.
- 31 Well, of course the music is beautiful, but only a moment ago she had been awfully mad at me for what she had felt had been the throwing-away of most of my week's wages for some kind of ridiculous piece of junk. And then she had heard the music; she had got the message, and the message had informed her that not only had the money not been thrown away, it had been wisely invested.
- 32 She played the record six times while I sat at the table in the dining room looking through a small catalogue of records given to me free of charge by the girl at Sherman, Clay, and then she said, "You have brought home only the one record?"
- 33 "Well, there's another song on the other side."
- 34 I went back to the machine, turned the record over, and put it in place.
- 35 "What is this other one?"
- 36 "Well, it's called 'Song of India'. I've never heard it. At

the store I listened only to the first one, which is called 'Cho-Cho-San'."

My notes about what I am
reading

37 "What is the meaning of that—"Cho-Cho-San'?"

38 "It's just the name of the song, I guess. Would you like to hear the other one, 'Song of India'?"

39 "I beg of you."

40 Now, as the other members of the family came home, they heard music coming from the parlor, and when they went in they saw the brand-new phonograph, and my mother sitting on the cane chair, directly in front of it, listening.

41 Why wouldn't that record be something I would want to keep as long as possible, and something I deeply cherish? Almost instantly it had won over my mother to art, and for all I know marked the point at which she began to suspect that her son rightfully valued some things higher than he valued money, and possibly even higher than he valued food, drink, shelter and clothing.

42 A week later she remarked to everybody during supper that the time had come to put some of the family money into a second record, and she wanted to know what was available. I got out the catalogue and went over the names, but they meant nothing to her, so she told me to just go to the store and pick out something *hrashali*, the Armenian word for "miraculous," which I was happy to do.

43 Now, as I listen to the record again, 42 years later, and try to guess what happened, I think it was the banjo beat that got my mother, that spoke directly to her as if to one long known, deeply understood, and totally loved; the banjo chords just back of the clarinet that remembered everything gone, accepted everything present, and waited for anything more still to come, echoing in and out of the story of the Japanese girl betrayed by the American sailor, the oboe saying words and the saxophone choking on swallowed emotion: "Fox Trot (On Melodies by G. Puccini, arranged by Hugo Frey) Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra. 18777-A."

44 After that, whenever other members of the family attacked me for some seeming eccentricity, my mother always patiently defended me until she lost her temper, whereupon she shouted, "He is not a businessman, thank God."

Reprinted by permission of the Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University.

Letter That Changed My Life

by Dennis Smith

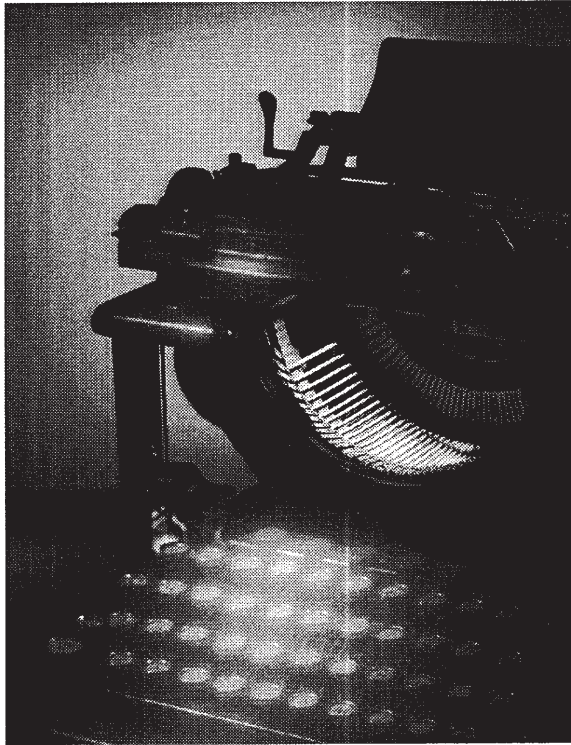


Photo courtesy of © CORBIS.

1 I was not yet 30 years old and was working as a firefighter in the South Bronx's Engine Co. 82, probably the world's most active firehouse at the time. It was warm and sunny, the kind of leisurely Sunday that brought extra activity to the neighborhood and to its firefighters. We must have had 15 or 20 calls that day, the worst being a garbage fire in the rear of an abandoned building, which required a hard pull of 600 feet of cotton-jacketed hose.

2 Between alarms I would rush to the company office to read Captain Gray's copy of the *Sunday New York Times*. It was late in the afternoon when I finally got to the *Book Review* section. As I read it, my blood began to boil. An article blatantly stated what I took to be a calumny—that William Butler Yeats, the Nobel Prize-winning

light of the Irish Literary Renaissance, had transcended his Irishness and was forever to be known as a universal poet.

3 There were few things I was more proud of than my Irish heritage, and ever since I first picked up a book of his poems from a barracks shelf when I was in the military, Yeats had been my favorite Irish writer, followed by Sean O'Casey and James Joyce.

4 My ancestors were Irish farmers, fishermen and blue-collar workers, but as far as I can tell, they all had a feeling for literature. It was passed on to my own mother, a telephone operator, who hardly ever sat down without a book in her hands. And at that moment my own fingernails might have been soiled with the soot of the day's fires, but I felt as prepared as any Trinity don to stand up in the court of public opinion and protest. Not only that Yeats had lived his life and written his poetry through the very essence of his Irish sensibility, but that it was offensive to think Irishness—no matter if it was psychological, social or literary—was something to be transcended.

5 My stomach was churning, and I determined not to let an idle minute pass. "Hey, Captain Gray. Could I use your typewriter?" I asked.

6 The typewriter was so old that I had to use just one finger to type, my strongest one, even though I could type with all ten. I grabbed the first piece of clean paper I

■ see Letter, page 2

could find—one that had the logo of the Fire Department of the City of New York across the top—and, hoping there would be a break in the alarms for 20 minutes or so, wrote out a four-paragraph letter of indignation to the editor of the *Sunday Book Review*.

7 Throughout his poetry, I postulated, Yeats yearned for a messiah to lead Ireland out from under the bondage of English rule, and his view of the world and the people in it was fundamentally Irish.

8 Just as I addressed the envelope, the final alarm of my tour came in, and as I slid down the long brass pole, I felt unexpectedly calm, as if a great rock had been purged from the bottom of my stomach.

9 I don't know why I felt it my obligation to safeguard the reputation of the world's greatest poet, at least next to Homer and Shakespeare, or to inscribe an apologia for Irish writing. I just knew that I had to write that letter, in the same way a priest has to pray, or a musician has to play an instrument.

10 Until that point in my life I had not written much of value—a few poems and short stories, the beginning of a coming-of-age novel. I knew that my writing was anything but refined. Like a beginning artist who loves to draw, I understood that the more one draws, or writes, or does anything, the better the end result will be, and so I wrote often to better control my writing skills, to master them. I sent some material to various magazines and reviews but found no one willing to publish me.

11 It was a special and unexpected delight, then, when I learned something I'd written would finally see print. Ironically it wasn't one of my poems or

short stories—it was my letter to the *Times*. I suppose the editor decided to publish it because he was first attracted by the official nature of my stationery (was his staff taking smoke breaks out on the fire escape?), and then by the incongruity of a ghetto firefighter's using words like *messianism*, for in the lines below my letter it was announced that I was a New York City firefighter. I'd like to think, though, that the editor silently agreed with my thesis.

I remember receiving through the fire department's address about 20 sympathetic and congratulatory letters from professors around the country. These letters made me feel like I was not only a published writer but an opinion maker. It was as if I was suddenly thrust into being someone whose views mattered.

I also received a letter from *True* magazine and one from *The New Yorker*, asking for an interview. It was the latter that proved momentous, for when an article titled "Fireman Smith" appeared in that magazine, I received a telephone call from the editor of a large publishing firm who asked if I might be interested in writing a book about my life.

I had little confidence in my ability to write a whole book, though I did intuit that my work as a firefighter was a worthy subject. And so I wrote *Report from Engine Co. 82* in six months, and it went on to sell two million copies and to be translated into 12 languages. In the years that followed, I wrote three more best-sellers, and last year published a memoir, *A Song for Mary: An Irish-American Memory*.

■ see Letter, page 3

15 Being a writer had been far from my expectations; being a best-selling author was almost unfathomable. How had it happened? I often found myself thinking about it, marveling at it, and my thoughts always came back to that letter to the *New York Times*.

16 For me, the clearest explanation is that I had found the subject I was searching for, one I felt so strongly about that the writing was a natural consequence of the passion I felt. I was to feel this same kind of passion when I began writing about firefighters and, later, when writing about my mother. These are subjects that, to me, represent the great values of human life—decency, honesty and fairness—subjects that burn within me as I write.

17 Over the years, all five of my children have come to me periodically with one dilemma or another. Should I study English or art? Should I go out for soccer or basketball? Should I take a job with this company or that one?

18 My answer is always the same, yet they still ask, for reassurance is a good and helpful thing. Think about what you're feeling deep down in the pit of your stomach, I tell them, and measure the heat of the fire there, for that is the passion that will flow through your heart. Your education and your experience will guide you toward making a right decision, but your passion will enable you to make a difference in whatever you do.

19 That's what I learned the day I stood up for Ireland's greatest poet.

Reprinted with permission from the July 2000 Reader's Digest.
Copyright © 2000 by The Reader's Digest Assn., Inc.

SHORT ANSWER ITEMS

Rubrics and Sample Responses

Objective 2 – Literary Selection

- 29 In “The Miraculous Phonograph Record,” why does Willie keep the record for 42 years? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 2

SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may offer an incorrect theme, character trait, conflict, or change
- ☐ may offer a theme, character, conflict, or change that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- ☐ may incorrectly analyze a literary technique or figurative expression
- ☐ may offer an analysis that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- ☐ may present only a plot summary
- ☐ may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- ☐ may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-1

29 It was a special record. It
was because it was his
first record.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

This student attempts to address the question, but the idea provided (his first record) is both general and somewhat inaccurate as the reason Willie keeps the record. In addition, the student provides no textual evidence.

RG-2

29 He keeps his record for 42 years because
it means a lot to him and marks a
huge landmark in his life.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

In this response the student attempts to explain why Willie keeps the record by offering two ideas (means a lot to him, marks a landmark in his life) that are too vague to determine whether either one is reasonable.

Objective 2 – Literary Selection Guide responses are labeled RG-1 through RG-16.

RG-3

29 He saved his money and worked really hard to get the phonograph. It was the first item he bought that he worked for, the phonograph is simply his memory.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

This student attempts to respond to the question but does not address the significance of the record. Furthermore, the response is inaccurate (saved his money) and vague (the phonograph is simply his memory).

RG-4

29 He keeps it to remember what he did when he was young and also in the story he says that he wants to keep the records as long as possible.

Score Point: 0

In this response the student presents an idea that is too general (to remember what he did when he was young) and offers text that is not relevant to the question (he says that he wants to keep the records as long as possible).

READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 2

SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may offer a reasonable theme, character trait, conflict, or change but provide only general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression but provide only general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable idea or analysis and may provide textual evidence, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea or analysis
- ☐ may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence without providing an idea or analysis

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-5

- 29 He knows that the record made a difference in the lives of his family. It made his mother more understanding of who he was.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

This student offers a reasonable idea about the character's reasons for keeping the record (made a difference...; made his mother more understanding...). However, the student does not provide any textual support.

RG-6

- 29 It was a very memorable moment in his life. He quotes that he had a special fondness for it whenever he listens to it in paragraph five.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student offers a general reason why Willie keeps the record for 42 years (a very memorable moment in his life). The student goes on to provide a text reference (he had a special fondness for it), which reinforces his attachment to the record but does not explain its significance.

RG-7

29 Willie keeps the record for 42 years because it was something sentimental to him. It was the very thing that totally changed his relationship with his mother. "Now, as I listen to the record again, 42 years later, and try to guess what happened..."

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student presents a reasonable idea of why Willie kept the record for 42 years (it was the very thing that totally changed his relationship with his mother). However, the student offers a direct quotation ("Now as I listen to the record...") that does not support this idea.

RG-8

29 Willie keeps the record for forty-two years because it changed the way his mother felt about him. The record positively influenced and won his mother over. It also showed her that Willie had higher values than she thought. She later defended Willy for this and has learned to cherish it.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

This student offers a number of reasonable ideas about Willie's reasons for keeping the record (changed the way his mother felt about him...positively influenced and won his mother over...showed her that Willie had higher values than she thought...later defended Willy for this...). Although the student makes some general references to the story (won his mother over, later defended Willie) these references are not clear and specific enough to be considered adequate textual evidence.

READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 2

SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ must offer a reasonable theme, character trait, conflict, or change and support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
- ☐ must offer a reasonable analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression and support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, sufficient responses must be clear and specific.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-9

- 29 Willie keeps the record because it is of sentimental value to him. It opened his mother's eyes to art, and this was something special to him. This is apparent in paragraph 31, "she had got the message... the money had not been thrown away, it had been wisely invested."

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

This student combines a reasonable idea (sentimental value) with a brief paraphrase (opened his mother's eyes to art) and a direct quotation ("she had got the message..."), which provides clear support for why Willie keeps the record.

RG-10

- 29 To quote the author, "Why wouldn't that record be something I would want to keep as long as possible, and something I deeply cherish?" The reason Willie feels this way about the record is that it represents the point in time that his mother's attitude toward him became more positive. She begins appreciating him more.

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

In this response the student provides relevant textual evidence ("Why wouldn't that record be something...I deeply cherish?") to support the idea that the record changed his mother's attitude toward Willie (became more positive, begins appreciating him more).

RG-11

- 29 Willie keeps the record for 42 years because it reminds him of how it changed his mother. In paragraphs 24-28, he wrote of how his mother went from being furious and chasing him, to hearing the record and slowly beginning to relax and enjoy the music, which is something he did not expect at all.

Score Point: 2 - Sufficient

This student presents a reasonable idea of why Willie kept the record for 42 years (it reminds him of how it changed his mother) and offers a specific synopsis (his mother went from furious and chasing him to hearing the record and slowly beginning to relax and enjoy the music) for textual evidence.

RG-12

- 29 Even though his family needs the money from his new job, he goes out and buys this record. Because "the music is beautiful," he knows (as his mother learns) that "the money had been wisely invested." In fact, the record becomes a symbol of the fact that Willie rightfully values some things higher than money.

Score Point: 2

In this response the student combines analysis (a symbol) with text (Willie rightfully values some things higher than money) to offer a reasonable idea of why Willie kept the record for 42 years. The student supports this idea with a relevant synopsis of the circumstances (even though his family needs the money, he goes out and buys the record) that bring about this result.

READING RUBRIC—LITERARY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 2

SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful theme, character trait, conflict, or change and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis of a literary technique or figurative expression and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, exemplary responses must demonstrate the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea or analysis.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-13

29 Willie kept the record for 42 years because his mother had seen something beautiful in the music and in her son. "... she (Willie's mother) began to suspect that her son rightfully valued some things higher than he valued money..." Willie and his mother were closer together from then on. She even patiently defended me (Willie) against critical family members. The record had become a symbol of the bond between Willie and his mother.

Score Point: 3 - Exemplary

This student presents a particularly insightful analysis that the record had become a symbol of the bond between Willie and his mother. This analysis is strongly supported with textual evidence (she began to suspect that her son rightfully valued some things...she even patiently defended me...) that is effectively connected to the idea.

RG-14

29 In "The Miraculous Phonograph Record" Willie Saroyan's experience of a simple record changes his life, and bonds his love of music to his mother as well. "Almost instantly, it had won my mother over to art." After a hard day of work, making not much money, Mrs. Saroyan questions Willie's "waste of money that might have helped the family, though after hearing the music she is amazed by this wise purchase, and as a result, his mother appreciates him more and defends him by saying, "He is not a business man."

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

The student's thoughtful analysis that "a simple record changes Willie's life and bonds his love of music to his mother" is well supported by accurate and relevant textual support. The response demonstrates the student's depth of understanding of why the record was so important to Willie.

RG-15

- 29 Willie keeps the record for 42 years because it reminds him of the day when his mother was deeply affected by music which enhanced the views of her son & their relationship. Willie states that that day marked the point when his mom realized he valued more than money or necessities. Willie keeps the record so long because it marks and reminds him of a major transformation in his mom's life; their relationship, and his values. From then on his mother would always patiently defend him.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

In this response the student offers an insightful analysis that Willie keeps the record because it reminds him of a "major transformation in his mom's life, their relationship, and his values." The student offers strong support for this analysis in the form of accurate paraphrased text (his mom realized he valued [art] more than money or necessities, from then on his mother would always patiently defend him).

RG-16

- 29 Willie keeps the record because even after 42 years, he still likes to reflect on the impact it had on his mother. Once she heard the music, she was no longer "tired and angry." She "got the message" that the money "had been wisely invested." Willie even surmises that it "marked the point at which she began to suspect her son rightfully valued some things higher than he valued money." The record marks the day Willie's mother began to truly respect him.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

This student offers a particularly insightful analysis about the impact the record had on Willie's mother and the record's symbolic value (...marks the day his mother began to truly respect him). This analysis is strongly supported with a synthesis of synopsis, paraphrase, and direct quotation.

Objective 3 – Expository Selection

- 30 Why is “Letter That Changed My Life” a good title for this selection? Support your answer with evidence from the selection.

READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not based on the text
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that does not address the question
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not reasonable
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- ☐ may incorrectly analyze or evaluate a characteristic of the text
- ☐ may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- ☐ may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-17

30 yes, "Letter that changed my life" is a brilliant title for this selection because it's about a letter that changed the narrators life.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

In this response the student attempts to offer a conclusion as to why the selection's title is a good one (it's about a letter that changed the narrator's life), but the information is too general by itself to determine whether it is reasonable. In addition, the student does not provide any textual evidence for support.

RG-18

30 He became a writer finally and wrote his own book.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

This student offers some general information from the selection (He became a writer . . .) but does not show how this information relates to the significance of the title.

Objective 3 – Expository Selection Guide responses are labeled RG-17 through RG-32.

RG-19

30 Because he writes a good and emotional letter to his children to tell them how they must be able to choose what they want to do.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

The student provides a statement (he writes a letter to his children) that is inaccurate because it is not based on the text.

RG-20

30 Because he thought that just because he was from the Irish background that he would never be able to write and when he put his self-determination with an open-mind, he accomplished many published items.

Score Point: 0

In this response the student presents an analysis that is incorrect (he thought that just because he was from the Irish background that he would never be able to write) and does not address the question asked.

READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the text that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence or provide no textual evidence at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable idea, analysis, or evaluation and may provide textual evidence, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea, analysis, or evaluation
- ☐ may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence without drawing a conclusion, offering an interpretation, making a prediction, or providing an analysis or evaluation

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-21

- 30 The title is significant in that his one letter out of many other works led him to a substantial career change. Now he says, "I have confidence in my ability to write a whole book."

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student offers a somewhat general conclusion in the form of a brief summary to show how one event, referring to the title, led to a series of life-altering events. The student does not provide relevant textual evidence for support.

RG-22

- 30 "Letter That Changed My Life" is a good title for this selection because the author wrote a passionate letter in haste. To his surprise, his impulsive letter was the beginning of a career in writing. He started to become famous. Smith received interviews and published more of his works.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

This student draws a clear conclusion as to why the title is good for this selection using a complete summary of how a passionate letter written in haste led to a career in writing. However, the response is not detailed enough to be considered a specific synopsis of text.

RG-23

30 The title "Letter that Changed My Life" fits the themes of this selection perfectly. Writing the letter to the New York Times was not only significant because it launched Smith's writing career, but also because it helped him ^{to} discover what matters in life. By supporting a cause he felt strongly about, Smith finally understood what was missing in his writing and made changes to become successful.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student presents a conclusion as to why the title is good for this selection by stating it helped launch Mr. Smith's writing career and helped him discover what matters in life. However, the student does not offer any clear and specific textual evidence to support this conclusion.

RG-24

30 The title, "Letter that Changed My Life" is appropriate for the story because the letter Smith wrote enabled him to change his destiny. As he wrote in the story, "For me, the clearest explanation is that I found the subject I was searching for...".

Score Point: 1

In this response the student uses vague analysis (enabled him to change his destiny) with a direct quote ("For me, the clearest explanation is that I found the subject I was searching for..."). This textual evidence is only weakly connected to the analysis.

READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ must draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
- ☐ must offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the selection and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, sufficient responses must be clear and specific.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-25

30 This title is appropriate because in the story, the man writes a letter that literally changes his life. He becomes a renowned writer. The reader can identify this in paragraph 14, "In the years that followed, I wrote three best-sellers, and last year published a memoir."

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

This student offers a reasonable conclusion as to why the title of this selection is a good one (the man writes a letter that literally changes his life; becomes a renowned writer) along with specific, relevant textual evidence in the form of a direct quotation ("In the years that followed...").

RG-26

30 The title signifies how much of an impact that the letter had on Dennis Smith's life. Mr. Smith stood up for what he believed in, and therefore received letters that made him feel like his opinion mattered. He gained confidence and went on to write four best-sellers and a memoir. He found his true meaning in life all from the inspiration of William Wordsworth, his favorite poet.

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

In this response the student offers a reasonable conclusion as to why the title of this selection is a good one (it signifies how much impact that the letter had on Dennis Smith). The student supports this conclusion by providing a specific synopsis of relevant text.

RG-27

- 30 "Letter That Changed My Life" is an appropriate title for this selection because the letter that Smith wrote to defend Yeats is the letter that spawned Smith's success as a published writer. As Smith's first published work, the letter sparked so much interest that it encouraged Smith to write his best-selling novels and a memoir.

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

The student provides a reasonable conclusion (the letter spawned Smith's success, the letter sparked so much interest) and supports this with specific textual evidence (best selling novels and a memoir).

RG-28

- 30 The title is appropriate due to the profound impact it had on Dennis Smith's life. When trying to recall how he'd become such an established writer, "...my thoughts always came back to that letter to the New York Times."

Score Point: 2

In this response the student offers a reasonable idea of why the title of this selection is a good one (due to the profound impact it had on Dennis Smith's life, how he'd become such an established writer). The student supports this idea by providing specific, relevant textual evidence in the form of a direct quotation ("...my thoughts always come back to that letter to the New York Times").

READING RUBRIC—EXPOSITORY SELECTION

OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful conclusion, interpretation, or prediction and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence
- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of the text and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence

In addition, exemplary responses show strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea, analysis, or evaluation.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

RG-29

30 The title is fitting because not only did the letter change the events in Dennis Smith's life, it also helped mold him as a person. The publishing of the letter led to many writing and publishing opportunities that started his writing career. Before the letter, "Being a writer had been far from my expectations." But the letter also taught him the importance in being passionate about his actions and following his heart. "These are subjects... that burn within me."

Score Point: 3 - Exemplary

This highly effective response includes two ideas imbedded into a particularly insightful conclusion (the letter...helped mold him as a person, the letter taught him the importance...of following his heart). Both of these ideas show strong evidence of the student's ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the conclusion.

RG-30

30 Because that one letter started his whole career as a successful author. After his letter was published he began receiving letters from professors around the country, interview requests from a magazine and newspaper, and then the life-changing call from a big-time editor asking if he would write an autobiography. That one letter had the power to change his whole life. It took him from a part-time, small-time writer to a best-selling author. "How it happened?... my thoughts always came back to that letter to the New York Times."

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

This student presents a solid, insightful conclusion (one letter started his whole career..., one letter had the power...) and strongly supports it with a combination of specific synopsis (After his letter was published...) and a relevant quote of accurate text ("How had it happened?...").

RG-31

- 30 "The Letter that changed my Life" is an appropriate title because the success of his letter changed him from a "ghetto firefighter" to a published author. His previous writing attempts had been rejected by publishers, but once his letter was printed in the NY Times, he was interviewed by The New Yorker magazine and asked to write a book about his life. Just one letter allowed him to envision his life differently, thus sparking a successful writing career.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

The student provides a particularly thoughtful conclusion as to why the title is good for this selection, using a specific synopsis of how a letter changed him from a "ghetto firefighter" to a published author. The response shows strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding as he/she effectively connects textual evidence (once his letter was printed...he was interviewed by the New Yorker magazine) to the main idea.

RG-32

- 30 This is a good title for the selection because the letter served as a catalyst that expedited Smith's true "passion" for writing. Having discovered his calling in life, Smith was able to focus his emotion towards writing. Writing the letter taught him that his "views mattered" and that the values that burned within him ("decency, honesty, and fairness") could be best expressed in writing.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

The student presents an insightful conclusion (the letter served as a catalyst that expedited Smith's true "passion") and strongly supports it with a mixture of synopsis (having discovered his calling in life, Smith was able to focus his emotion towards writing) and analysis (writing the letter that taught him, the values that burn within him) fused with relevant quotes of text ("views mattered"; "decency, honesty, and fairness").

Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection

- 31 What is one characteristic shared by Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith? Support your answer with evidence from both selections.

READING RUBRIC
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER
OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 0 — INSUFFICIENT

In **insufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not based on the selections
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that does not address the question
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is not reasonable
- ☐ may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, or make a prediction that is too general or vague to determine whether it is reasonable
- ☐ may incorrectly analyze or evaluate a characteristic of text based on both selections
- ☐ may not address the question in any way or may answer a different question than the one asked
- ☐ may offer only incomplete or irrelevant textual evidence from one or both selections

In addition, insufficient responses may lack clarity.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

Score Point 0 Guide Responses for Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection

TAKS Grade 11
Spring 2003

RG-33

- 31 They were both hard working and believed in the same ideas. They knew that all you had to do was apply yo-self in life, set a goal + use your skills to achieve it.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

This student offers a number of ideas (they were both hardworking and believed in the same ideas) that are too vague to determine whether they are reasonable.

31 Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have one
characteristic that is the same. It is
that they are both very emotional.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

The student presents an interpretation that is too vague (they are both very emotional) to determine whether it is reasonable. In addition, no textual evidence is provided.

- 31 One characteristic that Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith share is love of music. Dennis did not know that his choice of buying the phonograph and record was a good one until he saw the attention that Mrs. Saroyan showed. Even at first, Dennis wasn't sure if she really liked it until he saw the joy that the phonograph brought to her.

Score Point: 0

The student states that Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith share a love for music. The rest of the response (Dennis did not know...) clearly indicates that the student has confused Dennis Smith with William Saroyan, causing the response to be completely incorrect.

31 They both have a hobby. Mrs. Saroyan likes to listen to music everyday. Dennis Smith like to read a lot and write. That is one characteristic that they both share in the stories.

Score Point: 0 – Insufficient

This student identifies a shared characteristic (they both have a hobby, Mrs. Saroyan likes to listen to music every day, Dennis Smith likes to read a lot and write) that is not reasonable.

READING RUBRIC
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER
OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 1 — PARTIALLY SUFFICIENT

In **partially sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction that is based on both selections but supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence from one or both selections
- ☐ may draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction but may offer textual support from only one selection or may offer no textual support at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections that is supported only by general, incomplete, or partially accurate/relevant textual evidence from one or both selections
- ☐ may offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections but may offer textual support from only one selection or may offer no textual support at all
- ☐ may offer a reasonable idea, analysis, or evaluation based on both selections and may provide textual evidence from both selections, but this evidence is only weakly connected to the idea, analysis, or evaluation
- ☐ may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections but may draw a conclusion, offer an interpretation, make a prediction, or provide an analysis or evaluation based on only one selection
- ☐ may offer accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections without drawing a conclusion, offering an interpretation, making a prediction, or providing an analysis or evaluation

In addition, partially sufficient responses may be somewhat unclear or vague or may indicate that the student has difficulty making connections across selections.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

Score Point 1 Guide Responses for Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection

TAKS Grade 11
Spring 2003

RG-37

31 They both stand up for what they believe in. She stands up for her son. And he stood up for his Irish heritage.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

The student presents a reasonable characteristic (they both stood up for what they believe in) that is based on both selections but is supported only by general text references (she stands up for her son, he stood up for his Irish heritage).

- 31 Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith they both have a passion for something. In Mrs. Saroyan's case it is her love for the phonograph and the music that is played on it.
- In Dennis Smith's case it is his passion to writing poems and books that give him joy.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

This student states that passion is the characteristic shared by Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith. The student then explains how this general characteristic relates to each character (the phonograph and the music, writing poems and books). However, there is no specific textual support.

31 They both show irony because Mrs. Saroyan was upset because her son had spent money on something useless, but then she liked it & wanted more records once she heard it play. Dennis had no idea a simple letter which at first he wasn't even sure of writing would make him a famous writer.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student asserts that both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have irony as a characteristic, which is a reasonable interpretation. However, the student's attempts at text references (her son had spent money on something useless, simple letter which at first he wasn't even sure of writing) are not specific.

- 31 Both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have an intense passion for art. Mrs. Saroyan loves music, and Mr. Smith loves the written word, evident from his quote, "writing was a natural consequence of the passion I felt". The love these two feel for art is easily understood by anyone who has ever felt the emotion of a sorrowful song, or read a book that made one cry. Art in all of its forms can change ones life.

Score Point: 1 – Partially Sufficient

In this response the student identifies a reasonable characteristic (both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have an intense passion for art) and provides textual support for Dennis Smith ("writing was a natural consequence of the passion I felt"). However, no text support is provided for Mrs. Saroyan, making the response only partially sufficient.

READING RUBRIC
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER
OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 2 — SUFFICIENT

In **sufficient** responses, the student

- ☐ must draw a reasonable conclusion, offer a reasonable interpretation, or make a reasonable prediction based on both selections and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections
- ☐ must offer a reasonable analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections and must support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections

In addition, sufficient responses indicate that the student is able to make clear and specific connections across selections.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

Score Point 2 Guide Responses for Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection

TAKS Grade 11
Spring 2003

RG-41

31 Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith are both hardworking realistic individuals who have an epiphany on life and change their beliefs. Mrs. Saroyan ^{after a hard day work,} was originally concerned with the financial consequences of her sons decisions. Once she hears the music, she changes her mind and realizes ~~some~~ things are bigger than the necessities. Dennis was trying to pound away at his typewriter, between fires, to defend his heritage. By doing so, he recieved many new opportunities and realized he should simply write about what is he is passionate towards.

Score Point: 2 – Partially Sufficient

In this sufficient response the student presents the idea that both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith are hardworking individuals who have an epiphany and change their beliefs. This is a reasonable characteristic that is supported by a specific synopsis from both texts.

31

Mrs. Saroyan & Dennis Smith both share a similar characteristic of being supportive of their children & knowing that they will follow them in any direction. Both stories at the end show their supportiveness for their children; Mrs Saroyan exclaiming, "He is not a business man, thank God" meaning that she loves him for who he is not what everyone else wants to be, & Dennis Smith explaining to his children that it is passion that takes you where you want to go in life.

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

This student identifies a reasonable characteristic (being supportive of their children) based on both selections. This characteristic is supported with a relevant direct quote for Mrs. Saroyan (He is not a business man, thank God) and a relevant paraphrase of text for Dennis Smith (it is passion that takes you where you want to go in life).

31 Both Mrs. Saroyan and Mr. Smith share the feeling of doubt. Mrs. Saroyan doubted her son's investment in a phonograph; yet she herself liked the phonograph more than anyone once she heard it. Also Dennis Smith doubted his writings, Smith thought they might never get published anywhere. To his surprise, Smith, had his work published and consequently wrote several novels after that. Both characters had doubt until they realized what someone can figure out when they trust in themselves or others.

Score Point: 2 – Sufficient

In this response the student provides an interpretation based on the fact that Mrs. Saroyan and Mr. Smith share the feeling of doubt. The student then provides specific synopsis (Mrs. Saroyan doubted her son's investment...yet she liked the phonograph more than anyone, Smith thought they might never get published...) from both selections.

- 31 Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith are both able to act on their intense response to art. In "The Miraculous Phonograph Record," Mrs. Saroyan is so moved by the music that her mood changes. "I notice now that her expression no longer suggests that she is tired and angry." In "The Letter That Changed My life," Mr. Smith is motivated by his feelings of indignation to write a letter to the "New York Times." He says "I just knew that I had to write that letter," which proves he ~~was~~ determined to write it.

Score Point: 2

In this sufficient response the student presents the idea that Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith are both able to act on their intense response to art. This is a reasonable interpretation that is supported by direct quote ("I notice now that her expression no longer suggests that she is tired and angry") for Mrs. Saroyan and a mixture of synopsis and direct quote for Dennis Smith (Mr. Smith is motivated by his feelings of indignation to write a letter to the "New York Times"; "I just knew that I had to write that letter").

READING RUBRIC
LITERARY/EXPOSITORY CROSSOVER
OBJECTIVE 3

SCORE POINT 3 — EXEMPLARY

In **exemplary** responses, the student

- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful conclusion, interpretation, or prediction based on both selections and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections
- ☐ must offer a particularly thoughtful or insightful analysis or evaluation of a characteristic of text based on both selections and strongly support it with accurate/relevant textual evidence from both selections

In addition, exemplary responses indicate that the student is able to make meaningful connections across selections. These responses show strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding and ability to effectively connect textual evidence to the idea, analysis, or evaluation.

Evidence may consist of a direct quotation, a paraphrase, or a specific synopsis.

Score Point 3 Guide Responses for Objective 3 – Literary/Expository Selection

TAKS Grade 11

Spring 2003

RG-45

31 Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith both cherished something in life other than money. Mrs. Saroyan, even though she did not know it at first, loved music. In fact, she loved it so much she listened to ~~same~~ record over and over again until she decided to let her son buy another record even though she had been angered by his phonograph and record investment earlier. Dennis Smith's passion was for books and writing. He valued reading so much that he even wrote a letter to secure his famous poet's reputation which ironically, made him famous as well. Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith value the important things in life like books, music, and writing which sets them both apart from the remaining wealth and power striving society.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

This student provides a particularly thoughtful interpretation that both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith value the “important things in life.” This idea is strongly supported by a specific synopsis from both selections.

- 31 Both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have an appreciation for the arts that is exemplified in the two passages. Initially, Mrs. Saroyan feels that her son's phonograph purchase is a waste of scarce money, but once she discovers that it plays beautiful music, she wants to listen to it repeatedly and even finds another record an important family purchase. Dennis Smith shows his appreciation for good literature through his description of his blue-collar ancestors passing on their love of great literature to him. Even before he became successful, he had attempted to write poems, short stories and even a novel and enjoyed reading the captain's copy of the New York Times newspaper.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

In this highly effective response, the student presents the idea that both Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith have an appreciation for the arts. This conclusion is strongly supported with a specific synopsis from each selection, which indicates that the student is making meaningful connections across selections.

- 31 The one characteristic shared by Mrs. Sarayan and Dennis Smith is to stick up for something you strongly believe in. In Dennis Smith's specific case, he wrote an "apologia for Irish writing" (P9), defending his strong feelings repeating the opinions of the author of the newspaper article in "The New York Times." Just as Dennis Smith, Mrs. Sarayan also sticks up for what she believes in when she "put family money into a second record" (P42). This further exemplifies her new passion ^{new tangent!} for something greater than tangible items or money, her love for music.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

The student asserts that both characters "stick up for something [they] strongly believe in." This insightful interpretation is fully supported with a solid combination of relevant quotations ("apologia for Irish writing," "put family money into a second record") and paraphrase of relevant text (defending his strong feelings..., her new passion for something greater...). This response provides strong evidence of the student's depth of understanding.

- 31 It took courage for the strong opinionated Mrs. Saroyan to admit she was wrong about Willie's purchase ("All right, we keep this."). It also took courage for Smith to break out of the stereotype of the blue-collar worker and dare to mail his quickly written letter ("hoping there would be a break in the alarms for 20 minutes or so") to a possibly very sophisticated and critical audience (readers of the NY Times). In their own ways, Smith and Mrs. Saroyan were both courageous people.

Score Point: 3 – Exemplary

In this response the student states that Mrs. Saroyan and Dennis Smith are both courageous, though they display their courage in different ways (Mrs. Saroyan admits she is wrong about Willie's purchase, Dennis Smith breaks out of his blue-collar stereotype to write the letter). The student uses direct quotations from the selection to support these characterizations. The combination of the student's insight and ability to use effective textual support makes this response particularly strong.

WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Rubrics and Sample Responses

Write an essay explaining how one experience can have the power to affect a person's life in a positive way.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- ☐ write about the assigned topic
- ☐ make your writing thoughtful and interesting
- ☐ make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole
- ☐ make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
- ☐ write about your ideas in depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying
- ☐ proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- ☐ A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- ☐ An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- ☐ The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- ☐ There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- ☐ The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

one of the most experiences that can have a powerful affect on a person's life, in a positive way, is probably get married.

Knowing that you not alone, that you got someone their for you for life is got to be a powerful feeling. You now can plan things in your life that you didn't think about before, like having kids, big house, or even owning a sporty minivan. Everyone feels most completed when they found that special somebody and can now know they will spend the rest of their lives, through the good and bad times, not alone. They got someone to share everything with, physically or mentally. Being with someone who is not fearing to help you in bad times and is not going to judge you, makes you very close to that person. Being close to a person like that can make it easier to share your feelings without have it shared with someone doesn't care because that person ~~your~~ close to might be feeling the same way and he/she can rest more easier to know you listen and cared. Being married to someone is a very powerful thing in life that is taken for granted nows these days and it should not be. It can be a very positive life changing experiance that a person can have and affect more than just he/she.

Score Point: 1

In a weak introduction the writer states that getting married can affect a person's life in a positive way. In an attempt to develop this theme, the writer presents random, repetitive ideas (they have someone to share everything with, can make it easier to share your feelings, shared with someone who doesn't care); this random presentation disrupts the sentence-to-sentence progression. Overall, the development is vague. Frequent word usage errors and awkward sentences also interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

Life-Altering experiences occur everyday. Some experiences are good while others are horrible. These experiences can range from near death to just an ordinary letter. For the most part, these experiences plays a positive role in the afflicted persons life.

An example comes from the play, "A Christmas Carol," in which the character Scrooge receives a life-altering experience one night. Before this experience Scrooge was bitter old man who cared only from himself. Then one night after work he meets the ghost of his dead friend, Bob Marley, who says he will be visited by three spirits that night. Scrooge ignores the warning from the ghost and goes on with his daily routine. But lo and behold he is visited by the three spirits who in turn basically gives glimpses of Scrooge's life from the past, present and future. Scrooge is deeply affected by

the glimpse of the future because it shows his funeral and no one is there to mourn for him. When Scrooge returns from his visit he tries to change his future by doing many random acts of kindness to anyone he comes across that morning.

The character Scrooge is affected forever because of that one night with those three spirits. The play does not show what happens to Scrooge, but it leads us to believe that Scrooge is changed forever. Some people are changed when something occurs that could be so miniscule or some people have to be affected by something that is huge. We really never know when some event will change our lives until we live life to the fullest.

Score Point:1

The composition is ineffective because it is, for the most part, a plot summary of *A Christmas Carol* with little or no sense of the writer's own ideas or voice. The writer attempts to draw a conclusion about how Scrooge was changed forever, but the assertions are so vague and general (some people are changed when something occurs) and the sentence-to-sentence movement is so weak that it is difficult to determine what the writer is trying to say.

An experience can affect someone's life in a very good way. There are many experiences that one person can come in contact with. For example, I was recently in the Miss ——— Teen pageant. It was something that I will remember for the rest of my life. I went there a little nervous because I had never done anything like that before in my life. When I got there I was really relieved to see all the nice girls. That one weekend that I spent downtown at the Doubletree hotel really made me learn so much about myself. It's really amazing how much someone does not know about his/herself until you figure it out.

Just like me, anyone can go into an experience not knowing what could come of it, but in the end it could change someone's life in a positive way. It is the best way to get in touch with your self.

Score Point: 1

The writer of this brief composition attempts to use a teen pageant as an experience that can change someone's life in a good way. The writer uses a narrative organizational strategy to present ideas, but the information is so general and vague (I had never done anything like that before in my life, really made me learn so much about myself) that there is little or no evidence that the pageant provided a life-changing experience. Although the conventions are mostly appropriate and the focus on the pageant is consistent, the overall lack of development makes the composition ineffective.

September 11th, 2001 was a day that changed all of us. Yes, it was a day filled with very bad things, but in a way those events occurring sort of affected us in a positive way.

It is easy to be pessimistic about it and look on the bad side of things. But September 11th made us remember how lucky we are to be supportive of each other. When Sept. 11th happened, it could have been easy to give up, and our country would have fallen apart. But when bad things happen, it's important to be supportive & positive. A lot of people lost some family, but they should be happy that they still have other family as well.

Another example of affecting one positively through change is for instance a car accident. If you were not wearing your seatbelt, next time you could surely remember to have it on. That way it reduces the risk of death. That is a positive way of looking at the situation.

Change or one experience has the power
to positively affect one person, and I hope
I have allowed you to see this in my essay.

Score Point: 1

The writer tries to focus on the theme that although September 11th was a tragic day, it affected the United States in a positive way. The writer then shifts abruptly to learning a lesson from a car accident. The absence of an effective transition between these ideas prevents the reader from understanding how the ideas are related, which weakens the focus and coherence of the response. In addition, the development is general, vague, and repetitious (remember how lucky we are to be supportive, it's important to be supportive and positive). There is little or no sense of the writer's individuality in this composition.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- ☐ Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- ☐ Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- ☐ The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- ☐ Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

In the field of psychology, much pain is taken to better understand patterns of personalities. Many modern Psychologists believe that our mysterious brains have the power to interpret even the most insignificant event to have a meaningful impact on us throughout our lives. A movie with a profound moral or an old friend that held a remarkable philosophy on life can affect the way we view the world, molding our personality and altering our course in life. Take, for example, a timid young girl that has agreed to go on a rollercoaster for the first time. Perhaps she enjoyed the speed, the heights, the wind in her face. Imagine the adrenaline rush that thrills her for the first time. Suppose she took so much pleasure from this ride that she decided to take other risks, embark on new adventures. She takes a liking to skydiving, joins a club, gets a sponsor, and goes on to be an olympian. These events all transpired from her brain tagging an event as good and exciting, and encourages her subconsciously to try more similar events. This one ride will have changed her attitude, her personality, and her life.

Score Point: 2

The student maintains focus on the theme that our brains have the ability to interpret the significance of events. The writer develops this theme through an example of the timid girl riding the roller coaster for the first time. Despite the effective description of the ride (she enjoyed the speed, the heights, the wind in her face; the adrenaline rush that thrills her) and nice focus and coherence, the overall composition remains only superficially developed.

People are generally affected by everything they see, hear, or do. Whether the experience is good or bad, the individual can always be affected in a positive way.

When something bad happens to an individual they always have two options; they can either become depressed, angry, or develop phobias, or they can become stronger and move on. A prime and obvious example is the effect that 9-11 had on Americans. September 11 made people aware of the worst possible case scenarios are possible. Since then Americans have re-examined their values. People now have a strong sense of patriotism and family unity. As horrible the event of 9-11 was it ended up having a positive affect on those that survived. This is just one example of the way a bad experience can have a positive outcome.

On the otherhand, when something good happens to an individual their life is always affected in a positive way. A good experience allows a person to become more confident and self-assured. One example of this is a story about a girl who went out for class president. She was scared she wouldn't be elected, but her friends

reassured her that they had confidence in her. When she ended up winning the election she was affected in many more positive ways than she knew. She had now been taught that every opportunity was within her reach as long as she wanted it and had confidence. This good experience affected her in a positive way.

People have the power to decide how every event in their lives will affect them.

Score Point: 2

In a weak introduction the writer introduces the theme that good or bad, an experience can have a positive effect on an individual. Although the writer shifts quickly from a discussion of September 11th to a discussion of a class election, the reader has no difficulty understanding how the two ideas are related to the thesis. However, the overall development of the composition remains superficial, and the conclusion adds nothing new to the composition.

Life is an ever transcending journey. Along the way are obstacles that forever impact us. It is through these trials and tribulations that we live by. It is the positive experiences we treasure the most as is shown in the two short stories "The Miraculous Phonograph Record" and "Letter That Changed My Life."

"The Miraculous Phonograph Record" shows us a young boy who has gone out and purchased a brand-new phonograph and record. Not only did he enjoy this product, but it profoundly impacted his mother. In all her life she had never seen nor heard such a thing. She would be forever changed. Little did she realize, coming home from a day of hard work, that it would end on such a good note.

As for Dennis Smith, the "Letter That Changed My Life" did just that. He was working the usual Sunday shift of a firefighter in the South Bronx, but it would be no ordinary day. While sifting through the New York Times, an article ignites his artistic flame. Due to someone else's opinion about his favorite author sparked him to write a letter to the Times

in response to this fraudulent article. His letter was published and given such praise that it led to book offers and eventually into a best-selling author.

The two short-stories clearly show that you don't know when, who, or what will impact your life. Both cases show how positive things can happen without warning. From the purchase of a phonograph to the writing of a letter. There's no guide to life and that's what makes it fun, cherish the positive experiences in life.

Score Point: 2

In this composition the student focuses on the thesis that people should cherish the positive experiences in life. The student uses a mixture of purposeful plot summary with a small amount of analysis that serves as reflective commentary (Little did she realize, coming home from a day of hard work, that it would end on such a good note) to support this theme. However, the ideas are not developed with enough depth to reach a higher score.

I think that a persons life can change in a positive way just by one memorable experience.

An experience like this could happen to them at any part of there life. From when they were 5 playing in the front yard and have there ball roll into the street and some one is kinder craft to get it for them. To when they are 50 or 60 and they have car trouble and some one stops to see if they need help and if so how could they be of ostance. Any one thing can change a persons life in a positive way it just depends on the person.

Like take me for example when I was younger I was a real problem child. I used to start fire almost any were and I did not even care if any one saw me. When I was about 10 or 11 I almost burt down an apartment building by setting matches all threw out the stair case then I lit them to watch them burn. Plus when I was younger I was a cleptomaniact and stole stuff I really didnt need but just cause it was cool and fun. But then I got caught and I am glad to because it opened my eyes.

When I got home my parents didnt really yell at me they said they were more disapointed then angry. But after all this happend I decided I should pick my friends more closely.

So one day about a week after I got caught I was about to steal again when I saw one of my friends. So I decided not to do it cause I did not want to get caught again. So we started to talk and she said that she wanted me to go with her to this church thing with some other kids. So I decided to give it a try, plus she was cute and I couldn't say no. But after that one time I started to go more often cause it was cool. Plus it beat stealing stuff and getting in to trouble any day.

I can say that because of her my life was changed in a positive way and because of her I have started to help some people I know like she did with me. Because I feel that if some one is nice to you you should pass the favor to two other people and if we all did this atleast one the world would be a better place.

Score Point: 2

The writer uses a narrative organizational strategy to focus on how one memorable experience can change a person. The narrative is engaging, and the reader is able to get a real sense of the writer's unique perspective. Although the composition reflects a depth of thought, the fundamental errors in spelling and a recurrent lack of sentence boundaries indicate a limited control of conventions, which weakens the overall fluency and effectiveness of the response.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- ☐ For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

In the past year I have fought with and finally got under control two serious medical conditions. Those were hypertension and hypothyroidism. I was and still am a very enthusiastic football player. I'm 17 years-old and a Junior in high school. In order to deal with these problems I had to miss my entire Junior year of football. And you know at first it was ok - you'll be back after a month. Well after 3 doctors I finally had one tell me the truth that it was going to take about 6 months to get under control just to where I could do any kind of weightlifting and such. To put it simply, I was crushed. It was the first time in 9 years of playing that someone told me I couldn't. That was the beginning of my junior year and now I have 3 months left in school. I have been fully released to play again finally. We are about to begin Spring football practice. I've been lifting and working out with the team for about 5 weeks. This experience could have killed me mentally and don't get me wrong it was stressful not to be able to workout whenever you wanted. I've come to realize though that if I had played this year that I might not have lived through the season. Cory Stringer of the Minnesota Vikings died about the same time this all happened to me. He died of a stroke which I have since found out can be caused by hypertension or high blood pressure. All of this has made me a stranger person mentally and helped me to find a new appreciation for the game I so dearly love.

Score Point: 3

In this composition about how a stressful experience can strengthen a person mentally, the writer uses a focused, personal anecdote to detail a fight with a dangerous medical condition. The implied link to the prompt is strong, and the progression of thought from sentence to sentence is generally smooth and controlled. The minor conventions errors do not interrupt the fluency of the composition. The writer's reflective comments in the conclusion (beginning with "I've come to realize...") add depth and authenticity to the experience as well as a sense of individuality.

All humans are limited in possibilities if they stick to a regular routine day after day. That is why people need to allow for great experiences to occur, and to start living.

No matter how negative one views the world, there must be at least one event that makes such a person happy. The first vehicle one receives, first kiss, first child, everybody needs one great moment to affect their lives in order to remain whole. That is the main reason people have hobbies, it's to search for that one great moment to make the bad times seem worth it. Many people do not take advantage of what life has to offer.

When someone is trapped in a boring job with little connection to the outside world, they snap. Part of the reason we have so many psychopaths in society today can be blamed on the monotony of work and their dull, fading connection with the outside world. Life is meant to be enjoyed and being trapped at a desk is no way to live. Some could compare prison to the dull and boring lives that many humans live.

There is not a manual for life. However, if one doesn't allow for joyous moments to affect their lives, they are forever doomed.

Score Point: 3

In the introduction the writer presents the idea that humans need to be open to joyous experiences and sustains focus on this philosophical theme throughout the composition. The progression of ideas moves logically from exciting early life experiences to the search for great moments that will balance out bad times to the monotony of a boring job. Effective word choice (dull, fading connection with the outside world) not only adds some depth but also contributes to the authentic tone of this unique composition.

In life, there are many experiences and lessons to be learned which help people develop character to become who they are today. Although some experiences may not be remarkable, there are ways that an experience can have the power to affect a person's life in a positive way.

In "Letter That Changed My Life," by Dennis Smith, the common firefighter never thought he would eventually become something other than that. With the spontaneous response to a newspaper clipping, his writing became public, when really his only goal at the time was not to show off his writing skills, but to stand up for another author. Through this experience, the firefighter soon became an amazing author with best selling books sold around the nation.

In my life, personally, the experience of winning the class officer elections to be known with the respectable title of "Class Historian" completely changed my life positively. Through this experience, I have met a lot of incredible people and have gained many opportunities to become a leader and role-model for others.

Without these skills I have obtained throughout the year, I would not be the mature person I am today.

Just as the firefighter and I have experienced a positive affect through one change in our lives, it can happen to many others. As long as the people of the world today keep their eyes open for these new doors in their lives to show, they will see all the possibilities in front of them. Clearly, with as little as only one simple experience, lives can be changed positively, no matter if it is in just a story you read or in your own personal life.

Score Point: 3

The writer explores the idea that experiences do not have to be remarkable to have a positive affect. The writer discusses "Letter That Changed My Life" and provides a personal anecdote about winning a class election. The writer's ability to strongly connect Dennis Smith's story with her own not only enhances the coherence of the response but also strengthens the reader's understanding of her own unique perspective. The expression of genuine excitement about winning the election provides further evidence of voice.

Some people can be amazed by the power one experience can have on a person's life. It can have the effect of changing their actions, words, or even what they believe. I have not had a life-altering experience, however, my best friend has.

It has been about six months now since the two incidents happened, but it seems like just yesterday. My best friend, Casey, was not one of the safest drivers I knew, but she has changed since then. A few months ago, her uncle was in a serious car accident involving a drunk driver. It was a horrible experience, and what made it even worse was that a good friend of hers was in a wreck a week later. These two accidents scared her so bad that she was afraid to drive for a while. Like I said earlier, previously before these incidents she was not a safe driver. Her carelessness really made her realize the risk everytime you step into a car. Even when you are extremely late for an appointment, there is no excuse for carelessness and she has come to realize that now. It is

frightening to think that at one time she wasn't wearing a seatbelt, speeding, and running stop signs. Casey seems like a totally different person now and definitely in a positive way. It is sad to think that such drastic things have to happen just to make one person realize their carelessness. In Casey's case, her loved ones were involved in car accidents to make her realize that she needs to be more precautions. If she did not learn from this, then I am positive one day she would have been involved in an accident herself.

It is amazing how every little choice we make during each day alters our life in some way. Like the prompt says, one incident can affect a person in a positive way. I know that for a fact because my friend has experienced it.

Score Point: 3

The writer uses a friend's experience to reflect on the power one incident can have on a person's life. This reflection is apparent in both the introduction and the conclusion, adding depth to the response. The composition has a sense of completeness, and the writer's good command of conventions adds to its overall fluency.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- ☐ The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

One experience can be very powerful and affect the rest of a person's life. I know first hand that this is true. My experience is more physical than mental in an artistic form like in the stories. Only a few months back, I got burnt. Not just on a cooking pot or on an iron or a car engine, I caught on fire. I burned fifteen percent of my body and was admitted to the intensive care unit of a burn center at a local hospital. That was the worst thing that anyone could ever go through. Because of this huge accident, I had to calm down and stay out of the sun light and protect my fragile skin. During this period, I had a lot of extra time to just sit around and think. Before I went in to the hospital, I was pretty wild. I didn't really think through things before I started and I really started getting into some trouble. While I was thinking, I started to wonder what would I do with myself, and what I was going to do next. One day while sitting around, I had the radio on and this song started playing and in one part of the song, this girl says, "It's not getting what you want, it's wanting

what you've got." These words just touched my heart and made me stand back for a minute and really evaluate my life and see where I had gone wrong or not where I had gone wrong but why I had always felt like I did; and I realized that I was always chasing things that were out of my reach. Even though I knew they were out of reach, I still chased them and tried to bring them close. When I finally realized what I was doing is when I changed. I now hang out with a different group of friends who are more thankful for what they have simply because these people are always happy. I also started trying harder in school and started going to church more often to try to help others instead of myself.

Lives can change because of one experience. Some people's experiences are different than others. Mine has totally changed my life and I am glad to have heard that song. I shall always remember the words of that song and keep them close to my heart.

Score Point: 4

In this focused composition, the writer recounts the effects of an accident in which he was burned. The writer uses a combination of strategies—part narrative, part reflective—to develop his remembrance of his time in the hospital, his reevaluation of his life (I was always chasing things that were out of my reach), and the ways the accident ultimately changed him. The introduction and conclusion add meaning to the writer's account and contribute to the smooth and controlled progression of ideas. The writer's thorough account of this powerful incident creates depth of thought and clearly demonstrates a strong sense of voice and authenticity.

Often in one's life, situations come along that test our very beliefs and make us grow in a significant way. In my own situation, the simple task of reading a book made me have a greater awareness of the world around me. The book, The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck, made me take a closer look at the poor in my society.

Growing up in a relatively sheltered life, I rarely encountered individuals who were without. Everyday that I saw a person on the side of the road in harsh times, I would turn the other cheek and dismiss the person as a vagrant. But after receiving the reading assignment of John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, my ideas of those in need took on an entirely different perspective.

The book starts out with a family on a farm who is characterized by their hard work and determination. But tough times have come, and the bank takes possession of their land and title without regard to their feelings. This made me ponder, What would happen to me if I was stripped of everything I owned? Could I make the trek in search of food and get a job to feed my family?

This revelation indeed affected me in the subsequent days as I went about my daily routine. I saw a mother on the side of the road who had a sign in her hand that read, "Lost Job, Please Help." As a volunteer at the local library I had packets of information detailing local jobs in our small town. As I drove by, I handed her a pamphlet and told her that I knew she could get a job. Expecting to hear a decline I rolled up my window and drove away. The next day, however, I saw the woman at the library. She told me, "Thank you so much for that information, I got a job today. She left almost as abruptly as she came but I knew I had made a difference.

Usually it is something minute that can make a profound change in one's life. For me it was a book about migrant laborers. I am glad that I have the family and support I need to thrive, but I will no longer judge someone based on their financial situation.

Score Point: 4

Reading *The Grapes of Wrath* opened the writer's eyes to problems of poverty in today's society. The writer successfully explores this change by seamlessly weaving together personal reflection, references to the novel, and a personal anecdote. This is a difficult and risky task, but the writer handles it thoughtfully and effectively. This approach is insightful and engages the reader throughout the composition.

People are essentially affected by a series of incidents that helps form their own life and their own opinions. However, there always seems to be one incident that seems to affect a person's life positively. These experiences can be great or minute, but they have to affect the way a person views himself and others.

Sometimes people are affected by the sudden death of a family member, propelling them to reflect and to change their way of life. For example, my father was deeply affected by my uncle's sudden death. My uncle died in a car crash, just recently, driving people home. His last words were "are they all right?" See, he cared more about other people than his own life and at his funeral, thousands of people came. There was no room for the family at the funeral home. It was so full of people that we had to hold the funeral at a baseball park. My dad, seeing this, reflected upon all those times he refused to do something for other people and saw how selfish he had been. This resulted in my dad taking more pleasure in helping people who needed it. He goes out of his way to accommodate people, not because he wants those people to like him, but because Dad feels that anything he can do will help him honor the memory of my uncle. This whole new outlook of life was changed only because of the death of my most loved uncle.

However, not all experiences have to be so deep so as to change a whole outlook on life, some can be so seemingly trivial, yet they can form an important part of a person. In the story "The Miraculous Phonograph Record", Willie's mother is deeply affected by the music coming out from

the phonograph. Although at first she is angered by the purchase, her anger seems to melt away as she listens to the music. She stops chasing her son and even begs him to play the record a second time. She begins to understand that there are some things more important than money. This shift in attitude has an even larger impact on her relationship with her son. She develops a new respect for him and begins to understand that he has things to teach her about what's most valuable in life.

So whether it be something as simple as hearing a song on a record or something as large as a death of a loved one, an experience has the potential to become a pivotal moment that helps a person discover a new path.

Score Point: 4

The writer successfully combines personal reflection on a beloved uncle's death with analysis of "The Miraculous Phonograph Record" to support the theme that experiences great or minute affect the way a person views himself and others. The meaningful transition (However, not all experiences have to be so deep so as to change a whole outlook on life) between the two sections strengthens the coherence and progression of ideas. The writer's willingness to take the compositional risk to make the interesting connection between these ideas enhances the quality of the composition.

I had gone to the University of Texas to learn about the school and decide if I wanted to ^{ever} attend, but an experience occurred that shaped my life and my philosophy forever.

My family had been walking around all day, and the sweat started to pile up more and more on our faces when I noticed a strange gathering of people stepping around a massive sea of signs. My parents walked on, of course, but I decided to investigate the situation further and see what all the fuss was about.

Walking up to the group I was immediately confronted with shouts and screams. It was an Israel support rally and the members walked about, passing forms into the arms of intrigued bystanders. One came up to me and started raving about all the horrible things happening due to the evil corruption of the leaders in Palestine, and they asked me if I would support their cause with them and sign a petition.

I took it from the hands of the supporter and turned it about on my palms wondering if indeed the Israeli-Palestine conflict was all due to the "greedy" Palestinians. My mind erupted into thoughts and emotions and my body trembled slightly as I came to my own conclusions.

I handed the papers back swiftly, much to the confusion of the activist, and said I would take no sides. Then looking into his eyes I told him face to face that by doing what they were doing, the activists

were helping no one. Yes, the palistinians are not behaving as well as they should, but the Israels aren't blameless either.

By now a crowd began to trickle and gather around us, ebbing closer, and I continued my verbal opinions.

I finished by telling the man, mouth wide in confusion, that only by mediating and taking no side could the United States best help the situation in that violent area of the world. That being said, I quietly left and rejoined my parents, oblivious to my recent actions.

That one event forever changed my life. I decided that I could not just sit and watch from the side lines any more. I realized I must do something, anything, and so I immediately went to work on writing a book to illustrate my ideals. Although I have not finished as of this moment, I will finish. I was always afraid to say something, fearful to write my emotions, but now I realise that to do that would be a sin to myself and to all my morals. The experience forced me to come to grips with my own personal condition, and forced me, in a positive way, to change the future of my life forever.

Score Point: 4

In this highly effective composition, the writer uses a narrative organizational strategy to maintain focus on the profound effect of an encounter with dissident groups at a rally. The smooth progression of thought moves from a typical family tour of the University of Texas to the confrontation with the demonstrators to the realization that this experience changed the writer's life forever. The details provided at each stage (a strange gathering of people stepping around a massive sea of signs, my mind erupted into thoughts and emotions) create depth of development as well as a strong sense of the writer's own, authentic voice. The few minor errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.